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SYRIA: New Prime Minister

President Assad's removal of Prime Minister Kasm over the weekend is probably an attempt to quiet dissatisfaction among his key subordinates in the Syrian military in advance of the Arab summit opening next Sunday. 

25X1

Assad accepted Kasm's resignation and immediately ordered Speaker of the People's Council Zu'bi to form a new government. Rumors of such a change have been rife since two ministers in Kasm's cabinet received no-confidence votes last week as a result of the ongoing investigation by parliament of corruption charges. 

25X1

COMMENT: Assad probably hopes the formation of a new government will provide the appearance of carrying out promised economic reforms in lieu of fundamental policy changes. Kasm is not likely to be openly criticized and may even receive another position in government in return for his service. The designation of Zu'bi, a Sunni politician, does not suggest there will be meaningful reforms soon. 

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